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By Grace Hazard Conkling



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## **AFTERNOONS OF APRIL**



# AFTERNOONS OF APRIL

## A Book of Verse

BY  
GRACE HAZARD CONKLING



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HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY  
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*Published October 1915*

TO MY FATHER  
Christopher Grant Hazard, D.D.  
I DEDICATE THIS BOOK

*"So now, in the end, if this the least be good,  
If any deed be done, if any fire  
Burn in the imperfect page, the praise be thine."*

R. L. S.

(RECAP)

488696



## CONTENTS

PROSERPINA AND THE SEA-NYMPHS . . . . .	3
THE BARBERRY BUSH . . . . .	9
SYMPHONY OF A MEXICAN GARDEN . . . . .	13
I. The Garden . . . . .	13
II. The Pool . . . . .	16
III. The Birds . . . . .	17
IV. To the Moon . . . . .	19
THREE POEMS FOR R. P. C. . . . .	21
With a Little French Flower ( <i>to R. P. C.</i> ) . . . . .	21
To R. P. C. with a Baton . . . . .	22
Violin-Magic ( <i>to R. P. C.</i> ) . . . . .	25
THE WHITE PEAK ( <i>El Peñon Blanco</i> ) . . . . .	27
TO A SCARLET TANAGER . . . . .	28
THE SHIP . . . . .	30
ON ARRANGING A BOWL OF VIOLETS . . . . .	32
TO AN ORCHID . . . . .	33
OLD NÜRNBERG . . . . .	34
A BEETHOVEN ANDANTE . . . . .	37
TO A NEW-BORN BABY GIRL ( <i>L. H.</i> ) . . . . .	38
THREE RHYMES ( <i>to an Air from Mozart</i> ) . . . . .	40

## CONTENTS

TO THE LADY IN THE CHECKERED DRESS ( <i>a Picture by Hilda Belcher</i> ) . . . . .	41
THE LITTLE TOWN ( <i>written in Germany</i> ) . . . . .	43
ALLEGRETTO CAPRICCIOSO . . . . .	44
AVE VENEZIA . . . . .	46
THE LAGOON AT NIGHT ( <i>Venice</i> ) . . . . .	47
TO LAURENCE BINYON ( <i>after hearing his Lectures on Oriental Art</i> ) . . . . .	48
SONG OF THE VEERY THRUSH . . . . .	49
TO HERMES ( <i>in the Museum</i> ) . . . . .	50
A BREATH OF MINT . . . . .	52
MESSAGE DECIPHERED ON AN ANCIENT VIOLA D'AMORE . . . . .	54
TO STEVENSON ( <i>of some Critics</i> ) . . . . .	56
ANDANTE CON MOTO . . . . .	57
MOTORING AT NIGHT . . . . .	58
TO THE MEXICAN NIGHTINGALE ( <i>El Clarin</i> ) . . . . .	59
"I WILL NOT GIVE THEE ALL MY HEART" . . . . .	61
TO THE DONOR OF CERTAIN APPLES . . . . .	62
IN A MUSIC-ROOM ( <i>to M. S. B.</i> ) . . . . .	63
RHEIMS CATHEDRAL—1914 . . . . .	66
THE CHIMES OF TERMONDE . . . . .	67
 TWELVE LITTLE LYRICS . . . . .	 69
1. The Wind's Way . . . . .	69
2. The Wish . . . . .	69

## CONTENTS

3. Cake and Wine . . . . .	70
4. A Sunset Moment . . . . .	70
5. In an Old French Garden . . . . .	71
6. Evening Song . . . . .	71
7. "Adios, Amigo" . . . . .	72
8. "Brown Veery" . . . . .	73
9. Magnolia Moons . . . . .	73
10. The River . . . . .	74
11. To the Wind . . . . .	75
12. Nightingales . . . . .	75
 POEMS FOR ELSA AND HILDA . . . . .	 77
Fairy Music: To Elsa and Hilda . . . . .	79
To Elsa ( <i>On the Fly-Leaf of "A Child's         Garden of Verses"</i> ) . . . . .	81
A Mexican Lullaby . . . . .	82
To Elsa ( <i>with a Volume of "The Arabian         Nights"</i> ) . . . . .	84
To My Baby Hilda ( <i>with Hawthorne's         "Wonder-Book"</i> ) . . . . .	87
Envoy: To Elsa and Hilda: <i>Las Tardes de         Abril</i> . . . . .	91

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## **AFTERNOONS OF APRIL**





# AFTERNOONS OF APRIL

## PROSERPINA AND THE SEA-NYMPHS

### PROSERPINA

I TIRE of these embroideries.  
Now I have gilded all my stars  
And plumed with light my ilex-trees  
And made the moon and sun, there is  
The sea to finish. Only this  
Eludes my eager hand and mars  
The beauty of my tapestry.  
Which color of the changeful sea  
Would she most love, my mother? Blue  
Superbly shadowed like her hood,  
Or blazing, like her peacock? — hue  
Of dawn or wine or purple silk  
With foamy fringes white as milk?  
There is a gray-green much her mood  
In early Spring. . . . Nay, I must go  
And ask the sea-nymphs. They will know.

## PROSERPINA AND THE SEA-NYMPHS

SEA-NYMPHS (*singing*)

Mother Ceres' daughter  
Straying down the shore,  
Brings with her a beauty  
Never known before.  
(Who had heard, until she came,  
Such a ripple of a name?)

PROSERPINA

I hear them singing on the shore,  
My little sisters of the sea!  
Surely I can return before  
The golden lonesome afternoon  
Leans toward the dusk?

*I shall come soon*

*And weave a miracle for thee,  
My mother, out of showered light  
Upon great waters: and to-night  
Give thee my tapestry of dreams,  
And sing thee what the sisters sing.*  
... Too bright the sea! Unreal it seems,  
And so aloof, I hardly know,  
With all its glory changing so,  
How I dare try embroidering —  
Oh, they are there, all wet and cool  
From out the foam, and beautiful!

[ 4 ]

## PROSERPINA AND THE SEA-NYMPHS

SEA-NYMPHS (*singing*)

Is there any flower  
Delicate as she ?  
Only tender-breathing  
Sea-anemone.  
(Maidens, was there ever heard  
Such a little limpid word ?)

PROSERPINA

Laugh, laugh again, for I so love  
Your glittering laughter in the sun,  
Like sudden wave/crests fashioned of  
Bubbles and rainbows ! Did you say  
Nobody knew you came away ?  
Then I am not the only one  
Truant along these yellow sands !  
(How soft your little starfish hands !)  
Now tell me, darlings, is it true  
You travel far within the sea,  
And drive the dolphins two and two ?  
And are there islands rooted deep,  
That you must scale like mountains steep,  
To find out what their names may be ?  
(*I made an island, once, a shore  
Dazzled with surf.*) . . . Oh, tell me more !

## PROSERPINA AND THE SEA-NYMPHS

SEA-NYMPHS (*singing*)

Fair the clustered islands,  
Deep the coral wells!  
You who bring us flowers,  
Do you like our shells?  
These, all jeweled, only grow  
On an island that we know.

Who has felt its beauty  
Cannot go away.  
It is like a crystal  
Iris'd in bright spray. . . .  
There is untold mystery  
In the islands of the sea!

One is all a garden,  
One has sands of gold.  
One is built of silver :  
One is very old,  
Made of coral, and most fair.  
One conceals the GORGONS' lair.

Shells of many islands  
Blossoming from foam,  
See, they make a necklace!  
Will you wear it home?

[ 6 ]

## PROSERPINA AND THE SEA-NYMPHS

Asphodels are sweet, but ours  
Are the everlasting flowers.

### PROSERPINA

And I shall keep them evermore !  
But in the April-colored mead  
Beyond the crescent of the shore,  
There are such lilies ! Let me get  
Enough of them, with violet  
And hyacinth as I may need,  
To make you each a coronal !  
You will not have to wait at all,  
They are so many and so sweet !  
Throw me your little dripping kiss !  
Look, there are wings upon my feet,  
Wait for me ! . . .

(*Alone*) (Now, you asphodels  
Rose-lined and petaled like sea-shells,  
Could any fate be strange as this —  
The nymphs' green tresses to confine,  
And plunge full fathom-deep in brine ?)

I never thought to make them say  
The wisest color for my sea !  
Corn-flower blue it was to-day,  
And veined with topaz. . . . If I go

## PROSERPINA AND THE SEA-NYMPHS

Much farther, now the sun is low,  
The sisters will not wait for me,  
But April only once a year  
Comes true. . . . What loveliness is here —  
These unknown flowers waxen/white  
That glimmer in a starry crowd  
A-shiver with their own delight?  
Mother must tell me. . . . Are they real?  
Whence the sharp terror that I feel?  
*Dread Darkness — art thou god or cloud  
Enfolding me?*

*My mother, oh  
Hear thou, and make him let me go!*

SEA-NYMPHS (*singing, far away*)

Do you see her coming?  
Did you hear her call?  
There is sudden menace  
In the sky, and all  
The bright waters have gone gray.  
*Little friend, we dare not stay!*

## THE BARBERRY BUSH

THREADING the wood, if I might see  
A hamadryad leave her tree,  
Or Pan with dripping honeycomb  
Luring a nymph away from home,  
Eager to ask some friendly faun  
What way Proserpina had gone,  
Or catch an accent, pungent, wild,  
Of garrulous Hermes, like a child  
I grieved to miss them. Everything  
Was hushed : no creature cared to sing,  
Nor memory of song sufficed :  
The earth had grown unparadised.

But where a barberry in flower  
Had tossed against the sun a shower  
Of pendent blossoms, golden shapes  
Clustered like small immortal grapes  
Grown for a baby Bacchus, all  
The air turned rich and musical  
With honeyed little changing chimes  
Only a bee makes when he climbs  
A bell-shaped bloom, and being stout,  
Shakes pollen/dust and music out.



## THE BARBERRY BUSH

Whether the barberry had made  
A compact with the winds, afraid  
To lose her sweets if wind should blow,  
Or what she offered, can I know?  
But all her essence hovered there  
Diffused in aromatic air  
That glittered like a living wine:  
Her soul exhaled, besieging mine  
With beauty, making me at home  
Within the windless delicate dome  
Of vaulted fragrance over her:  
Some poignancy of mint or myrrh,  
Rosemary-whim, lavender-lure,  
Or balm of bruised balsam pure,  
Some whiff of fern, fennel or rue,  
Tang of the wild grass steeped in dew,  
Had Hermes flung her from mid-flight  
As benison for his delight?  
For incense-strange and spiced was she,  
A pensioner of Araby,  
Dreaming her dream of winged feet  
And cloud-lost laughter bittersweet.

Yet not for Hermes did each urn  
Of hidden honey yield in turn  
Its amber to the pilgrim bees!

## THE BARBERRY BUSH

Their god is Pan, the god of trees,  
Who pipes for them all blossom/news,  
And knows what melody to use  
For ripe wild-grape and apple-tree,  
And you in bloom, O Barberry!  
Was that your *motif* that I heard  
His veery sing, in which recurred  
Honey and spices, grape-bloom mist,  
Young leaves in evening amethyst,  
With ringing of thin topaz bells  
Like small close-clustered asphodels?

So sang Pan's veery, so sang he,  
That all the world was Thessaly,  
And any cedar might avail  
To hold an answering nightingale.  
The mosses by the oak-tree's root  
Caressed a gleaming naked foot,  
But quick as light the nymph was gone.  
I glimpsed the brown pursuing faun  
And heard the chiming of their glee.  
Proserpina eluded me,  
But from your blossoms showered down,  
I guessed the color of her gown —  
What else but color of the sun?  
And singing veery there was none

## THE BARBERRY BUSH

Until into my mood you flowered,  
Illumining the wood unbowered.

Now kindly Pan forevermore  
Be mindful of you ! May he store  
Your honey in Arcadian jars,  
Summon back Hermes from the stars  
Into your zone of spicy zest —  
A little Orient in the West !  
Jeweled with bees, gilded with bloom,  
You shall hold court within your room  
If once he pipe beside the door,  
The Master Improvisator !  
Thither may he resort, content  
To find you richly redolent,  
And make you music all your own,  
So river-sweet in reedy tone,  
It shall inspire at evening hush  
His brown immortal veery-thrush.

## SYMPHONY OF A MEXICAN GARDEN

- I. THE GARDEN. *Poco sostenuto* in A major  
"The laving tide of inarticulate air"  
*Vivace* in A major  
"The iris people dance"
- II. THE POOL. *Allegretto* in A minor  
"Cool-hearted dim familiar of the doves"
- III. THE BIRDS. *Presto* in F major  
"I keep a frequent tryst"  
*Presto meno assai* in D major  
"The blossom-powdered orange-tree"
- IV. TO THE MOON. *Allegro con brio* in A major  
"Moon that shone on Babylon"



### TO MOZART

*What junipers are these, inlaid  
With flame of the pomegranate tree?  
The god of gardens must have made  
This still unnumbered place for thee  
To rest from immortality  
And dream within the splendid shade  
Some more elusive symphony  
Than orchestra has ever played.*

#### I. In A major

### THE GARDEN

*Poco sostenuto*

THE laving tide of inarticulate air  
Breaks here in flowers as the sea in foam,  
But with no satin lisp of failing wave ;

## SYMPHONY OF A MEXICAN GARDEN

The odor-laden winds are very still.  
An unimagined music here exhales  
In upcurled petal, dreamy bud half-furled,  
And variations of thin vivid leaf:  
Symphonic beauty that some god forgot.  
If form could waken into lyric sound,  
This flock of irises like poising birds  
Would feel song at their slender feathered throats,  
And pour into a gray-winged aria  
Their wrinkled silver finger-marked with pearl.  
That flight of ivory roses high along  
The airy azure of the larkspur spires  
Would be a fugue to puzzle nightingales  
With too-evasive rapture, phrase on phrase.  
Where the hibiscus flares would cymbals clash,  
And the black cypress like a deep bassoon  
Would hum a clouded amber melody.

But all across the trudging ragged chords  
That are the tangled grasses in the heat,  
The mariposa lilies fluttering  
Like trills upon some archangelic flute,  
The roses and carnations and divine  
Small violets that voice the vanished god,  
There is a lure of passion-poignant tone  
Not flower-of-pomegranate (that finds the heart

## THE GARDEN

As stubborn oboes do) can breathe in air,  
Nor poppies, nor keen lime, nor orange-bloom.

What zone of wonder in the ardent dusk  
Of trees that yearn and cannot understand,  
Vibrates as to the golden shepherd horn  
That stirs some great *adagio* with its cry  
And will not let it rest?

O tender trees,  
Your orchid, like a shepherdess of dreams,  
Calls home her whitest dream from following  
Elusive laughter of the unmindful god!

### *Vivace*

The iris people dance  
Like any nimble faun:  
To rhythmic radiance  
They foot it in the dawn.  
They dance and have no need  
Of crystal-dripping flute  
Or chuckling river-reed;  
Their music hovers mute.  
The dawn-lights flutter by  
All noiseless, but they know!  
Such children of the sky  
Can hear the darkness go.

## SYMPHONY OF A MEXICAN GARDEN

But does the morning play  
Whatever they demand,  
Or amber-barred bourré  
Or silver saraband?

### *II. In A minor*

#### THE POOL

##### *Allegretto*

Cool-hearted dim familiar of the doves,  
Thou coiled sweet water where they come to tell  
Their mellow legends and rehearse their loves,  
As what in April or in June befell  
And thou must hear of, friend of Dryades  
Who lean to see where flower should be set  
To star the dusk of wreathéd ivy braids,  
They have not left thy trees,  
Nor do tired fauns thy crystal kiss forget,  
Nor forest-nymphs astray from distant glades.

Thou feelest with delight their showery feet  
Along thy mossy margin myrtle-starred,  
And thine the heart of wildness quick to beat  
At imprint of shy hoof upon thy sward :  
Yet who could know thee wild who art so cool,  
So heavenly-minded, templed in thy grove  
Of plummy cedar, larch and juniper ?  
O strange ecstatic Pool,

## THE BIRDS

What unknown country art thou dreaming of,  
Or temple than this garden lovelier ?

Who made thy sky the silver side of leaves,  
And poised its orchid like a swan/white moon,  
Whose disc of perfect pallor half deceives  
The mirror of thy limpid green lagoon,  
He loveth well thy ripple/feathered moods,  
Thy whims at dusk, thy rainbow look at dawn !  
Dream thou no more of vales Olympian :  
Where pale Olympus broods,  
There were no orchid white as moon or swan,  
No sky of leaves, no garden/haunting Pan !

### *III. In F major*

#### THE BIRDS

##### *Presto*

I keep a frequent tryst  
With whirr and shower of wings :  
Some inward melodist  
Interpreting all things,  
Appoints the place, the hours.  
Dazzle and sense of flowers  
Though not the least leaf stir,  
May mean a tanager !  
How rich the silence is until he sings !

[ 17 ]



## SYMPHONY OF A MEXICAN GARDEN

The smoke-tree's cloudy white  
Has fire within its breast.  
What wingéd mere delight  
There hides as in a nest  
And fashions of its flame  
Music without a name?  
So might an opal sing,  
If given thrilling wing,  
And voice for lyric wildness unexpressed.

In grassy dimness thatched  
With tangled growing things,  
A troubadour rose-patched  
With velvet-shadowed wings,  
Seeks a sustaining fly.  
Who else unseen goes by,  
Quick-pattering through the hush?  
Some twilight-footed thrush,  
Or finch intent on small adventurings?

I have no time for gloom,  
For gloom what time have I?  
The orange is in bloom:  
Emerald parrots fly  
Out of the cypress-dusk:  
Morning is strange with musk:

## TO THE MOON

The wild canary now  
Jewels the lemon-bough,  
And mockingbirds laugh in the rose's room.

*Presto meno assai — D major*

The blossom-powdered orange-tree  
For all her royal speechlessness,  
Out of a heart of ecstasy  
Is singing, singing, none the less !

Light as a springing fountain, she  
Is spray above the wind-sleek turf :  
Dream-daughter of the moon's white sea,  
And sister to its showered surf !

*IV. In A major*

## TO THE MOON

*Allegro con brio*

Moon that shone on Babylon,  
Searching out the gardens there,  
Could you find a fairer one  
Than this garden, anywhere ?  
Did Damascus at her best  
Hide such beauty in her breast ?

When you flood with creamy light  
Vines that net the somber pine,

[ 19 ]

## **SYMPHONY OF A MEXICAN GARDEN**

**Turn the shadowed iris white,  
Summon cactus stars to shine,  
Do you free in silvered air  
Wistful spirits everywhere ?**

**Here they linger, there they pass,  
And forget their native heaven !  
Flit along the dewy grass  
Rare Vittoria, Sappho, even !  
And the hushed magnolia burns  
Incense in her gleaming urns.**

**When the nightingale demands  
Word with Keats who answers him,  
Shakspeare listens, understands,  
Mindful of the cherubim :  
And the South Wind dreads to know  
Mozart gone as seraphs go.**

**Moon of poets dead and gone,  
Moon to gods of music dear,  
Gardens they have looked upon,  
Let them re-discover here :  
Rest, and dream a little space  
Of some heart-remembered place !**

### THREE POEMS FOR R. P. C.

#### WITH A LITTLE FRENCH FLOWER

(To R. P. C.)

Go tell him, yellow giroflée,  
I found you on an April day,  
Where the white Indre pours its slow  
Still silver round a gray château.  
From an old wall you leaned to see  
The moat reflect your witchery,  
Ere the sweet river turned again  
To wander on across Touraine.

How the bees grumbled when I took  
Their flower to press it in my book !  
The honey they had failed to get  
Within your heart lies hidden yet,  
As in my heart, unfound, unsought,  
The hidden honey of my thought :  
The shy words that I dare not say,  
Go tell him, yellow giroflée !

TO R. P. C. WITH A BATON

THIS wand that tapers slenderly  
From ebony to ivory,  
Can call from brass and wood and strings  
Beauty that is the soul of things.  
With this divining-rod, among  
Old woes and wonders long unsung  
Thy hand shall grope, instinct to feel  
What springs of music to unseal.  
For thee — as when a master nods —  
Shall sigh again the ancient gods:  
Returning o'er their starry track  
Thy summoned heroes shall come back.  
For thee shall sound the hardihood  
Of Mime's hammer in the wood,  
And clearly down its glades forlorn  
The challenge of young Siegfried's horn:  
Thy violins shall call and sing  
Like birds in Siegmund's House of Spring,  
Or cry the heartbreak and the stress  
Of Tristan's tragic tenderness:  
Thy gesture shall bewitch the sky  
With wild Valkyries streaming by:  
Again dark Wotan with a word

## TO R. P. C. WITH A BATON

Shall splinter the new-welded sword,  
Shall still the battle's clang and shock,  
And ring with flame Brünnhilde's rock ;  
And when on sobbing muted horns  
Gray prophecies of the gray Norns  
Foretell the coming twilight doom,  
Across the menace and the gloom  
Thy wand of magic shall not fail  
To fling the radiance of the Grail.

When gods and heroes understand  
And answer to thy beckoning hand,  
Can I — if thou shalt set the time —  
Refuse to answer thee in rhyme ;  
Withhold the uncourageous song  
My soul has sheltered overlong ?

As though a hidden mountain spring —  
Small dreaming inarticulate thing —  
Enchanted broad awake, should hear  
The ocean's diapason near,  
And chime of breakers on the sand  
Thrill o'er the phantom hills inland,  
(Nor recognize the organ-sound  
Of the soft-thundering pines around,) —  
Then, music-startled out of sleep,

## TO R. P. C. WITH A BATON

Should feel its tiny pulses leap,  
And up the sheer blue heights of air  
Against the very sun should dare  
Lift its frail praise, and bid rejoice  
Its thin and silver-dropping voice,  
So shall that sealed and secret spring  
That is my soul, find voice to sing,  
By thy enchantment made aware  
How the deep calls along the air.  
Thy orchestra awake in the sun  
At highest heave and farthest run  
Shall fling me leagues on leagues away,  
The magic of its poignant spray :  
And I far inland, on that breath  
Shall taste Life bittersweet — and Death :  
Shall send my song fluttering alone  
Where the sea calls unto its own —  
A sea-bird beating far from me  
Home to the breakers, home to sea.

## VIOLIN-MAGIC

(To R. P. C.)

I HEARD you touch a fairy thing  
That lured the trees to blossoming :  
I saw them flush — and then you made  
Their green leaves greener as you played.  
You drew your bow so gently down  
I dared not breathe, lest breathing drown  
The tender little crooning tone  
That was a wood-thrush all alone.  
The tense string quivered, and I knew  
Where grasses strange with morning dew  
Climb a far hill I love, that all  
The drops they wore shone magical,  
Brimmed with the dawn, nor lovelier  
Than those your crystal measures were,  
The deepest forest/dusk you found  
With silver darts of moonlit sound  
That pierced the trees' reluctant crowd  
And made the dryads laugh aloud;  
I hear them now, and one I hear  
Whose voice unearthly/thin and clear  
Bears trace as through the trees she slips  
Of wildwood honey on her lips.

[ 25 ]



## VIOLIN-MAGIC

But when your enigmatic mood  
Nor dawn nor dusk of a deep wood  
Nor dryad's laugh nor thrush's song  
Nor April's blossoms would prolong,  
And only wayward beauty calls  
Along your argent intervals,  
Then am I tranced with listening,  
Lest my heart stir, or anything  
Within me question, and your soul  
Withdraw from mine its dear control ;  
Like him, Grail-sent, whom named of men  
The white swan bore away again.

## THE WHITE PEAK

*(El Peñon Blanco)*

It leans to hold the sunset  
Against its savage breast,  
Warmed by the last dull ragged red  
Wind-blown along the west.

The dusk binds early stars  
About its gaunt old head,  
Reared where the winds of heaven go  
Their way unshepherded.

One night I felt its heart beat  
In rhythm sad and slow :  
Was it the little calling bell  
That trembled far below ?

Was it the wolf that wandered  
Unanswered, desolate,  
Out of despair of loneliness  
Chiding a silent mate ?

God, how my heart remembers —  
Heard on that barren height —  
The bell that tolled, the wolf that cried,  
The passionate wind of night !

[ 27 ]

## TO A SCARLET TANAGER

My Tanager, what crescent coast  
Curving beyond what seas of air,  
Invites your elfin commerce most?  
For I would fain inhabit there.  
Is it a corner of Cathay  
That I could reach by caravan,  
Or do you traffic far away  
Beyond the mountains of Japan?

If, where some iridescent isle  
Wears like a rose its calm lagoon,  
You plan to spend a little while,  
An April or a fervid June,  
Deign to direct my wanderings,  
And I shall be the one who sees  
Your scarlet pinnacle furl its wings  
And come to anchor in the trees.

Do you collect for merchandise  
Ribbons of weed and jeweled shells,  
And dazzle color-hungry eyes  
With rainbows from the coral wells?

## TO A SCARLET TANAGER

But when your freight is asphodels,  
You must be fresh from Enna's lawn !  
Who buys, when such a merchant sells,  
And in what market roofed with dawn ?

Much would it ease my spirit, if  
To-day I might embark with you,  
Low-drifting like the milkweed skiff,  
Or voyaging against the blue,  
To learn who speeds your ebon sails,  
And what you do in Ispahan ?  
Do you convey to nightingales  
Strange honey-dew from Hindostan ?

With you for master-mariner,  
I yet might travel very far :  
Discover whence your cargoes were,  
And whither tending, by a star :  
Or what ineffable bazaar  
You most frequent in Samarkand :  
Or even where those harbors are  
Keats found forlorn, in fairy-land.

## THE SHIP

To-day my little Ship comes home,  
And I will tell you what it brings:  
Beyond the pale enchanted foam  
I see its wings.  
To-day my little Ship comes home.

It brings a seven-petaled rose  
That on the steps of Pæstum grew:  
Beauty that now no mortal knows  
This wild rose knew.  
It brings a seven-petaled rose.

It brings the reed a faun forgot  
Because a dryad was so fair.  
(Now he is loved and needs it not,  
He will not care.)  
It brings the reed a faun forgot.

It brings a little cedar-tree  
From white Olympus many-glenned:  
(Of weary gods it used to be  
The well-loved friend.)  
It brings a little cedar-tree.

## THE SHIP

Age-ripened wine it brings, likewise :  
Sharp honey from Hymettus' hill :  
Clear turquoise twilights found 'neath skies  
Sea-fringed and chill.  
Age-ripened wine it brings, likewise.

My laden Ship comes bounding home  
To shaken throats of nightingales.  
Salt crystals from Ægean foam  
Cling to its sails.  
To-day my little Ship comes home.

## ON ARRANGING A BOWL OF VIOLETS

I DIP my hands in April among your faces tender,  
O woven of blue air and ecstasies of light !  
Breathed words of the Earth-Mother, although it is November,  
You wing my soul with memories adorable and white.  
I hear you call each other :  
“ Ah, Sweet, do you remember  
The garden that we haunted — its spaces of delight ?  
The sound of running water — the day's long lapse of  
splendor,  
The winds that begged our fragrance and loved us in the  
night ? ”

## TO AN ORCHID

MOON-HORNED orchid in the oak,  
Uttering thee, what spirit spoke?  
Thou who hearest patiently  
Humble *patois* of the bee,  
Hast thou anything to tell  
Of the angel Israfel?

Who would murmur half aloud  
Word of wind or star or cloud,  
If thy beauty were a throat  
For his far ethereal note?  
He by whom thou wert designed  
Kin of cloud and star and wind?

Mystic flower, could'st thou say  
If the little children play  
Much with Mozart where he dreams  
Daylong by the heavenly streams?  
Does he tire of asphodel?  
And with Keats, oh, is it well?



## OLD NÜRNBERG

You mellow minstrel of a town,  
So suave and weather-warmed and brown,  
So red and blue and unafraid  
Of colors Titian might have made,  
Carmine and cobalt scarce belong  
In sturdy staves of German song,  
Which as you sing, you dare bedeck  
With cadenced tints of peacock's neck!

You make and sing, as you have done  
Through centuries of shade and sun,  
A naïve music that beguiles,  
Of porcelain spires and peach-bloom tiles,  
And at your brownest you reveal  
A message exquisitely real —  
Dark topaz eaves of some old inn,  
Or house-front like a violin.

Was amber most your mood, when he,  
The Master,<sup>1</sup> marked your minstrelsy,  
Or did you dream in azure smoke  
And hide your colors 'neath a cloak?

<sup>1</sup> Richard Wagner.

## OLD NÜRNBERG

Had your least tower been less fair,  
Less like a voice across the air,  
Or any dome less gold and blue,  
Would he have stayed for love of you?

To him whom you enthralled so long,  
You were the singer and the song:  
Within your streets the tawny tone  
Of ancient houses, most your own,  
Was like an Aria he heard,  
Bold rhythm mated to proud word,  
And balcony or carven door  
Struck chords he may have missed before.

Can you recall what undertones  
Of mirth along your cobblestones  
Allured him, or what far-flung spells  
From lanes of legendary bells?  
Somehow your beauty let him hear  
Forgotten voices singing clear:  
Somehow you made your meaning plain,  
That Herr Hans Sachs might live again.

The Master long ago has gone,  
But like his music, you sing on,  
In colors clear and magical—

## OLD NÜRNBERG

Emerald, coral, cardinal.

. . . I pray you, guard your antique grace,  
The fountain in your market-place,  
Your doves, your bells — and belfries too—  
And that brown-amber smile of you !

## A BEETHOVEN ANDANTE

THE wood wind warbled wisely  
Of how the dusk begins  
Before the glow of sunset  
Had left the violins:  
And a cool flute spoke purely,  
As though some spirit far,  
Within the sunset's hollow  
Had lit the evening star.

But when a simple oboe  
Sang low and shepherd/sweet,  
It was the awaited summons  
That made the dusk complete.  
Oh, quietly it led us,  
With crook of slender gold,  
Across the starry pastures  
Into the farthest fold.

## TO A NEW-BORN BABY GIRL

(L. H.)

AND did thy sapphire shallop slip  
Its moorings suddenly, to dip  
Adown the clear, ethereal sea  
From star to star, all silently?  
What tenderness of archangels  
In silver thrilling syllables  
Pursued thee, or what dulcet hymn  
Low-chanted by the cherubim?  
And thou departing must have heard  
The holy Mary's farewell word,  
Who with deep eyes and wistful smile  
Remembered Earth a little while.

Now from the coasts of morning pale  
Comes safe to port thy tiny sail.  
Now have we seen by early sun,  
Thy miracle of life begun.  
All breathing and aware thou art,  
With beauty templ'd in thy heart  
To let thee recognize the thrill  
Of wings along far azure hill,

[ 38 ]

## TO A NEW-BORN BABY GIRL

And hear within the hollow sky  
Thy friends the angels rushing by.  
These shall recall that thou hast known  
Their distant country as thine own,  
To spare thee word of vales and streams,  
And publish heaven through thy dreams.  
The human accents of the breeze  
Through swaying star-acquainted trees  
Shall seem a voice heard earlier,  
Her voice, the adoring sigh of her,  
When thou amid rosy cherub-play  
Didst hear her call thee, far away,  
And dream in very Paradise  
The worship of thy mother's eyes.

## THREE RHYMES

*(To an Air from Mozart)*

### I

THE fairest tree the year can show,  
It is the tree of Maytime snow :  
The plum, the cherry and the pear  
With snow/storms tangled in their hair!

### II

The kindest brook that heart can wish,  
Pours amber 'round its silver fish,  
Runs not too deep, runs not too wild,  
And follows like a friendly child.

### III

The strangest of all fairy spells  
Is in the veery's waft of bells,  
That leaves the soul in midmost air  
To climb the twilight's twinkling stair.

## TO THE LADY IN THE CHECKERED DRESS

*(A picture by Hilda Belcher)*

LADY, may a lover guess  
Why you destined for your dress  
Ebony and ivory  
Intermingled curiously?  
Were you thinking of the moon  
Spilling silver upon June,  
And the velvet dark that holds  
Roses curtained in its folds?  
Had you seen at midmost night  
Pale magnolia lamps alight?  
In the faint sweet garden where  
Lilies make a pool more fair,  
Found them dimly shining yet,  
Alabaster over jet?  
Did you dream, could you know  
Snow and shadow upon snow  
Thus would lend fantastic grace  
To your subtly-smiling face?  
Could you know, did you guess  
Such a daring rhythmic dress,  
Gleaming here, darkening there,



## TO THE LADY IN THE CHECKERED DRESS

Would but render you more rare?  
Something whimsical in you  
Tells me that you surely knew :  
Tells me that you chose and planned  
Whiteness that should match your hand :  
Squares of dusk to suit your hair  
And the shadows prisoned there.  
Made of mystery as you are,  
And remote as any star,  
There is still your charm that clings —  
Little wayward human things  
That allure, that beguile :  
Mona Lisa so would smile !  
Still be kind, nor love me less  
That the challenge of your dress,  
O Fastidious and Sweet,  
Gives me courage at your feet !

## THE LITTLE TOWN

*(Written in Germany)*

O LITTLE town of memories,  
So brown and golden in the light,  
Do you remember one who sees  
You beckon, day and night?

There is a sweet French town that broods  
Dove-gray upon a rounded hill,  
Whose peopled streets were solitudes  
To me, a wanderer still.

And in the South, a white town sleeps.  
Carven of ivory it seems,  
But a man's heart perversely keeps  
Such beauty for his dreams.

The rosiest, coziest town I know  
Is this above the rushing Rhine:  
Here might he stay who could not go  
Home to a town like mine.

They do not know you, little town,  
Who say that all roads lead to Rome:  
I've tramped the broad world up and down,  
And every road leads home.

## ALLEGRETTO CAPRICCIOSO

BEYOND the river, lit by the low sun,  
The green flame of the marshes dares the dusk,  
And hems us in with thrilling emerald.  
A redwinged blackbird rides a river-reed  
As though it were a galleon,  
And he, bold mariner, after many days  
Of sailing perilous seas, were come to anchor  
To leeward of some iridescent isle.  
The tide 's at flood,  
And shining ripples run along the reeds.  
Suddenly you discover  
Where an inverted elvish lily-leaf  
Wears horns and pointed beard : Pan or his satyr,  
Who slides behind the boat and vanishes  
With backward grimace.  
Somewhere upon the rim of sunset  
A veery builds a magical tower of tone,  
Amber and golden,  
That gleams, once heard,  
And crumbles into starlight.

The hills grow dim : they are putting on their stars.  
The little pomegranate clouds

## ALLEGRETTO CAPRICCIOSO

That ripened in the sky are all forgotten :  
The hour passes.

But in my heart I know  
One day a wind will blow softly from nowhere —  
The immemorial wind of faëry —  
And I shall hear a veery preluding starlight  
Down by the gilded river  
Where the tide runs and chuckles in the reeds :  
Instantly I shall see  
The redwing flash above the emerald marsh,  
The inverted lily masquerade as satyr :  
Once more the little clouds  
Pomegranate-tinted,  
Shall hang like wondrous fruit in highest heaven,  
Ripe for archangels :  
And I shall glimpse as now the gleam in your eyes,  
Not bent upon me full — that were too human ! —  
But peering sidewise like an ecstatic faun's.

## AVE VENEZIA

THE ocean is a garden  
That folds you closely home  
With larkspur/blue from heaven,  
And roses of bright foam.

The dawn upon your waters  
Is like anemones.  
Your noons are flaked with scarlet  
As from pomegranate/trees.

The bubble towers that sunset  
Dilates with rainbow light,  
Dusk turns to shadowed silver  
Like olive/trees at night.

O silver of dark olives,  
Of cool night/shrouded seas,  
That gives you rest from color,  
And time for memories!

## THE LAGOON AT NIGHT

(*Venice*)

IMMEMORIAL lagoon,  
Where the drifted dusk lies deep,  
Do lost years with ghostly shoon  
Steal across your sighing sleep ?  
  
Is it wistfulness compels  
Darkling waves to lift and gleam ?  
Do the Campanile bells  
Summon back an ancient dream ?  
  
Are they wings that fan your tide ?  
In the darkness can you see  
All the angels almond-eyed  
Heaven lent to Italy ?  
  
All the faces meekly fair  
Only Botticelli knew,  
And serene in native air,  
Lippo Lippi's angels, too ?  
  
Night-blue water, deep and dim,  
When your ripples tremble, are  
Raphael's little cherubim  
Winging toward their distant star ?

TO LAURENCE BINYON

*(After bearing his lectures on Oriental Art)*

THIS song is yours, for wonder of a mountain  
With filmy cone of immemorial snow,  
And for the windings of a river-valley  
Whose crags and mists your spirit seemed to know.

You delicately spoke, and far trees murmured :  
The waterfall stood white against the wind :  
I scarce could tell its wistful shape of beauty  
From that revealing beauty of your mind.

In plum-tree blossom and in peacock feather  
You read the rune of immortality.  
You gave a soul to tiger and to tempest,  
And that dire dragon of the coiléd sea.

By a lone lake where most the wild fowl gather,  
I thought you seemed to linger as at home.  
Or have you known the lost shore's fairy margin  
That Keats remembered for its fragile foam ?

This is your song : for when my soul was empty,  
You were strange beauty's unsuspected priest  
To fill it, like a garden, full of flowers —  
Those flowers that are the angels of the East.

## SONG OF THE VEERY THRUSH

If through gray dusk there come to thee  
From poplar/spire or cedar/tree  
A little agile melody  
With wingéd feet, like Mercury,

O let thy spirit follow where  
It flits into the upper air !  
For only so may mortals dare  
Ascend the twilight's mystic stair.

The veery pondering alone  
Devises magic of his own,  
And wings with many a gleaming tone  
His messengers divine, unknown.

. . . It is the moment ! Now behold  
The swift flight — ere the world turn cold !  
Those notes like feathers of thin gold  
A-whirl in spirals manifold —

O still thyself to hear them, ere  
There be no singing anywhere,  
Nor echoes even, for a stair  
Of music up the serene air !



## TO HERMES

*(In the Museum)*

HERMES, your little lovely boy,  
Adoring you with look and laugh,  
Implores you to remember joy  
You had of feathered foot and staff:  
How soon and gladly would you go,  
If chubby fingers marble-pale  
Tugged with the warmth they used to know,  
And softness certain to prevail!

If, when he wonders to behold  
The exiled fauns and centaurs sad,  
Some memory of a coast of gold,  
Or glimpse of Ithaca you had,  
Or galley white against the sea,  
Shall give your feet their wings again,  
Will you not haste to set him free  
From halls so cold and alien?

Should gods who grieve to see you go  
Lean wistfully to bid you stay,  
Tell them your baby boy must know  
The elder beauty even as they:

## TO HERMES

Must learn the lure of island foam,  
And Ætna's plume of vapor pale,  
And why these make him most at home —  
Vineyard and sea and nightingale !

## A BREATH OF MINT

WHAT small leaf/fingers veined with emerald light  
Lay on my heart that touch of elfin might ?

What spirals of sharp perfume do they fling,  
To blur my page with swift remembering ?

Borne in a country basket marketward,  
Their message is a music spirit/heard,

A pebble/hindered lilt and gurgle and run  
Of tawny singing water in the sun.

Their coolness brings that ecstasy I knew  
Down by the mint/fringed brook that wandered through

My mellow meadows set with linden/trees  
Loud with the summer jargon of the bees.

Their magic has its way with me until  
I see the storm's dark wing shadow the hill

As once I saw : and draw sharp breath again,  
To feel their arrowy fragrance pierce the rain.

## A BREATH OF MINT

O sudden urging sweetness in the air,  
Exhaled, diffused about me everywhere,

Yours is the subtlest word the summer saith,  
And vanished summers sigh upon your breath.

MESSAGE DECIPHERED ON AN ANCIENT VIOLA  
D'AMORE

If you will listen when I sing,  
You restless little Leaf of Spring,  
    Will close a while those ardent eyes,  
And keep those hands from fluttering,

You shall detect the vain disguise  
That music is for lovers' sighs,  
    And hear them breathe immortally  
Through tones astray from Paradise.

Brim with the fluent gold of me,  
My amber pouring melody,  
    As brooks with liquid sunlight do :  
Your spirit's minstrel I would be !

Nay, let me be your sky of blue,  
You whirling Almond Petal, you !  
    The wind that chases you shall know  
'T is Heaven he has lost you to !

What willing wind can ever blow  
Your flowery fancies to and fro,

## ON AN ANCIENT VIOLA D'AMORE

As my least zephyr of a phrase,  
That urges and allures them so?

My Mistress, lo, I am the praise  
Of your most delicate wild ways,  
For I am Love. Oh, hear me sing  
The beauty of your nights and days!

## TO STEVENSON

*(Of some Critics)*

THEY scan the page all musical with perfect word and  
phrase,

And frown to find you trivial who talk of primrose ways,  
Nor fathom your brave laughter, nor know the way you  
trod,

O serioushearted wanderer upon the hills of God!

There where you lie beneath the sky far in a lonely land,  
You who were even glad to die, — care not who under-  
stand

Your whimsical sweet strays of tune and your heroic  
mirth —

Diviner of Arcadian ways throughout the dreary earth!

## ANDANTE CON MOTO

ACROSS the quiet air there flows a tide  
Of homing pigeons: soft  
They settle on the carven cornices  
And dip, and coo, and take the sun  
That lies in shining ripples on their necks  
And gilds their breasts.  
The old gray church has set  
To front the west,  
A dome of tremulous amber,  
Full of light:  
The belfry frames a little colored cloud.  
The strong sun, low and lower,  
Grows reminiscent ere he vanishes.  
Beyond the other towers  
The evening star emerges luminous,  
And the sky dims, recedes, and grows more vast.

The pigeons are asleep.  
The church is veiled  
In filmy dusk, and in the darkening city  
Lights begin.

So tired I am: and how the night  
Comes surely, softly!  
It will be good to sleep.



## MOTORING AT NIGHT

WHEN we had crossed the hills at last,  
Smooth moth-gray valleys fluttered past:  
Through gossamer mist and silver dew  
We followed stars where stars were few,  
And down a hollow country ran  
That wore the moon for talisman.  
Here, locust blossoms were in spray,  
And wild-grape fragrance barred the way  
With sudden walls of vague delight:  
We brushed them by, we pierced the night,  
Into the secret hours we sped,  
With green leaves pouring overhead  
From steady, somber trees. We found  
The dim aloof enchanted ground  
Where iris flowers beneath the moon  
Bind on wild Hermes' wingéd shoon:  
And then, ere yet the spell was gone,  
We stopped, an hour before the dawn,  
Under a dream-sequestered oak,  
Hearkened our hearts, nor moved nor spoke  
Till like a bright wind running by,  
AURORA flitted up the sky.

## TO THE MEXICAN NIGHTINGALE

(*El Clarin*)

CLARIN, from what glens of air  
Chime your cameo-colored bells?  
When they ring, I know them rare,  
Fluted like the lips of shells  
For the tone to ripple down,  
Honey-pale or amber-brown.

When the tawny evening spills  
Drops of topaz down the pine,  
Light denied the dusking hills  
Do you gather and confine  
In some clear aerial jar,  
On the branch where flits the star?

Do you pour the liquid light  
Early from your lyric urn?  
Nay, it was at midmost night  
That I heard among the fern  
Golden drops that fell in showers,  
Shaken down as out of flowers!

[ 59 ]

## TO THE MEXICAN NIGHTINGALE

When the rain of light was gone,  
Poured in rhyming gold like rain,  
How your elfin bells at dawn  
Delicately chimed again,  
Soft as sea/shells murmur of  
Her whose lovely name is Love!

Did the Foam-Born brim those bells  
With the wistful melodies  
Of enchanted vocal shells?  
Does the satin sigh of trees  
Bring a memory of foam?  
Clarín, do you sing of home?

**“I WILL NOT GIVE THEE ALL MY HEART”**

I WILL not give thee all my heart  
For that I need a place apart  
To dream my dreams in, and I know  
Few sheltered ways for dreams to go :  
But when I shut the door upon  
Some secret wonder — still, withdrawn —  
Why dost thou love me even more,  
And hold me closer than before ?

When I of Love demand the least,  
Thou biddest him to fire and feast :  
When I am hungry and would eat,  
There is no bread, though crusts were sweet.  
If I with manna may be fed,  
Shall I go all uncomforted ?  
Nay ! Howsoever dear thou art,  
I will not give thee all my heart.

## TO THE DONOR OF CERTAIN APPLES

MAY every day that makes the year  
As luring to your eyes appear  
And fragrant to your sense, as those  
Your apples streaked with gold and rose :  
Like them in beauty manifold,  
Be curved and exquisite to hold,  
All flavored with the wind and sun,  
And brimmed with sweetness every one.  
Could ordinary mortals know  
The western orchard where they grow,  
And watch the artist hours put on  
New saffron and vermilion,  
How master a more delicate art  
For joy to ripen in the heart ?  
Or who could covet after these,  
Mere gold from the Hesperides ?

## IN A MUSIC-ROOM

(To M. S. B.)

THIS room of lucent shoal-sea green,  
With window-radiance poured between,  
Is brimmed with reminiscent sound,  
Like one the lost Endymion found,  
When, wandering the ocean-floor,  
He entered an enchanted door,  
And heard the billows boom like bells  
Above his head : and singing shells  
In curious crystal monotone  
Made him forget he was alone.  
So I, within this lovely room,  
Evade all wistfulness and gloom,  
Hearing the great piano sing  
Sweet as Theocritus in Spring.  
The pictures on the sea-green walls  
To what ethereal festivals  
Allure the thought? Is it for this  
The player faces Artemis,  
Who from her glancing golden frame  
Bends whitely as a crescent flame

[ 63 ]

## IN A MUSIC-ROOM

To feel the wind of music blow,  
As once she felt it long ago ?  
And some immortal, lately gone,  
Opened a window to the dawn  
In yonder shimmering canvas, blue  
And silver-green and lit with dew,  
A subtle lyric for the eyes  
In rhythms of the wild sunrise !  
. . . But here is moonlight for the soul  
Of the sun-wearied, where the whole  
Broad ocean flashes bright and bare  
Within a painter's magic square,  
And through the splendor flutters pale  
The wraith of a receding sail.  
And here, above the mystic keys  
Whose nocturnes rhyme with memories,  
Content at quiet close of day,  
Four Venice doves in blue and gray  
Colored like dusk, divinely drowse.

. . . . .  
Now in this temple of white vows  
To Beauty, I would breathe my own,  
For here no mortal prays alone.

*Once more, thou Polish Keats, a boon!  
Snare me the music of the moon.*

## IN A MUSIC-ROOM

*Mozart, thy wingéd sandals on,  
Show me the way to Helicon.*

*Dear Robert Schumann, by thy grace  
Detain shy Beauty in this place.*

*And thou, Beethoven, ob, invite  
The gods to linger here to-night!*



RHEIMS CATHEDRAL — 1914

A WINGÉD death has smitten dumb thy bells,  
And poured them molten from thy tragic towers :  
Now are the windows dust that were thy flowers  
Patterned like frost, petaled like asphodels.  
Gone are the angels and the archangels,  
The saints, the little lamb above thy door,  
The shepherd Christ! They are not, any more,  
Save in the soul where exiled beauty dwells.  
But who has heard within thy vaulted gloom  
That old divine insistence of the sea,  
When music flows along the sculptured stone  
In tides of prayer, for him thy windows bloom  
Like faithful sunset, warm immortally!  
Thy bells live on, and Heaven is in their tone!

## THE CHIMES OF TERMONDE

THE groping spires have lost the sky  
That reach from Termonde town:  
There are no bells to travel by,  
The minster chimes are down.  
It's forth we must, alone, alone,  
And try to find the way:  
The bells that we have always known,  
War broke their hearts to-day.

*They used to call the morning  
Along the gilded street,  
And then their rhymes were laughter,  
And all their notes were sweet.*

I heard them stumble down the air  
Like seraphim betrayed:  
God must have heard their broken prayer  
That made my soul afraid.  
The Termonde bells are gone, are gone,  
And what is left to say?  
It's forth we must, by bitter dawn,  
To try to find the way.

[ 67 ]

## THE CHIMES OF TERMONDE

*They used to call the children  
To go to sleep at night :  
And then their songs were tender  
And drowsy with delight.*

The wind will look for them in vain  
Within the empty tower.  
We shall not hear them sing again  
At dawn or twilight hour.  
It's forth we must, away, away,  
And far from Termonde town,  
But this is all I know to-day —  
The chimes, the chimes are down!

*They used to ring at evening  
To help the people pray,  
Who wander now bewildered,  
And cannot find the way.*

## TWELVE LITTLE LYRICS

### I

#### THE WIND'S WAY

A WHITE way is the wind's way,  
The silver side o' the leaf:  
Follow the wind, heart of mine,  
Heart of grief!

Wind of the dawn, wind of the dusk,  
Wingéd wind of the day,  
Who would follow the wind must go  
The wind's way.

### 2

#### THE WISH

THE eastern cloud had morning at its core:  
The river stood in silver at my door:  
The valley held a great wind like the sea,  
That poured its surging rapture over me,  
And flung me challenge through the singing pine,  
"Who could dispel such wistfulness as thine?"

[ 69 ]

## TWELVE LITTLE LYRICS

What hath the dawn forgotten or deferred?"  
I said, "From him, my only love, one word!"

### 3

#### CAKE AND WINE

SHE took a pinch of pollen-dust,  
A drop of moonlit dew,  
And made the elf a magic cake  
To help his vigil through:

And when the dawn crept up the sky,  
With wine of clover pink  
Spiced with heartsease, she brimmed a cup,  
And gave it him to drink.

### 4

#### A SUNSET MOMENT

I SAW a cloud bloom in the west,  
The color of a robin's breast,  
And poppies in a cheerful crowd,  
That caught the color of the cloud:  
The garden walls so white before  
Flushed to the red the poppies wore;

[ 70 ]

## EVENING SONG

And when a wine-winged butterfly —  
Flake of the sunset — floated by,  
Quite suddenly on every hand  
There lay before me Fairyland.

### 5

## IN AN OLD FRENCH GARDEN

ONCE more down alleys sweet and dim  
Glimmers the Spring begun:  
The merchild on the fountain-rim  
Romps naked in the sun:  
The marble Pan has poised his reed  
As though in act to play,  
Yet pipes no summons. Who would heed  
Now you have gone away?

### 6

## EVENING SONG

LITTLE flakes of sunset  
Blown about the sky,  
Burn like trellised roses  
Blooming heaven-high.

[ 71 ]

## TWELVE LITTLE LYRICS

You should have one for your hair,  
And a star to pin it there,  
If the wind were I !

Perilous your rose-face!  
How shall I beware?  
No gold so forbidden  
As your shining hair!  
*Rose of sunset, golden rose,  
If you knew what my heart knows,  
Would it make you care?*

### 7

“ADIOS, AMIGO”

FAREWELL, comrade !  
Follow the trail.  
Does it avail  
That I am sad ?

When the day dies,  
Where will you be?  
The stars shall see  
Tears in my eyes.

## MAGNOLIA MOONS

### 8

#### "BROWN VEERY"

BROWN veery by the river,  
Brown wood thrush in the pine,  
Your golden harps a-quiver  
Shall silence song of mine!  
Until my thought deliver  
One phrase as frail and fine,  
Sing, Minstrel by the river,  
Sing, Poet in the pine!

### 9

#### MAGNOLIA MOONS

LAST night the moon of April  
Went sailing up the sky.  
I crept into the garden  
When nobody was by,  
For it was long past bedtime  
For children such as I.

The garden was n't sleepy  
Even so late at night:



## TWELVE LITTLE LYRICS

The cactus/buds were open,  
Brimful of silver light,  
And all the great magnolia  
Had flowered in globes of white.

I saw they were moon-colored  
And shiny, just the way  
The big moon looked above me:  
And there I meant to stay,  
But mother said magnolia moons  
Would shine as bright next day.

## IO

### THE RIVER

As I went down the cedar stair,  
I saw the river pacing fair  
Between its tender tilted lawns,  
And past a thousand sailing swans.

And I forgot strange talk of wars,  
To see its ripples swarm with stars:  
And all the thoughts that I could think  
Were swans along the river-brink.

## NIGHTINGALES

### 11

#### TO THE WIND

You little lovely wind  
With starry brow,  
What gift have you in mind  
To bring us now?

You cross the lilac-tree  
On silver feet,  
But it is memory  
Makes you so sweet!

For such a wind as you  
With stars above,  
Led day-worn lovers to  
Their night of love.

### 12

#### NIGHTINGALES

At sunset my brown nightingales  
Hidden and hushed all day,  
Ring vespers, while the color pales  
And fades to twilight gray:

[ 75 ]

## TWELVE LITTLE LYRICS

The little mellow bells they ring,  
The little flutes they play,  
Are soft as though for practising  
The things they want to say.  
It's when the dark has floated down  
To hide and guard and fold,  
I know their throats, that look so brown,  
Are really made of gold.  
No music I have ever heard  
Can call as sweet as they!  
I wonder if it is a bird  
That sings within the hidden tree,  
Or some shy angel calling me  
To follow far away?

**POEMS FOR ELSA AND HILDA**



## FAIRY MUSIC

TO ELSA AND HILDA

O you shall play a seaweed harp,  
And you, a beechnut violin,  
Till your thin music silver-sharp  
Invites the vagrant fireflies in.

And you shall play a moonbeam flute,  
And you, a mullein-stalk bassoon,  
Till all the crickets gather mute  
To criticize beneath the moon.

And you shall play the shepherd horn  
That calls white fancies home like sheep :  
And you, the oboe all forlorn  
That Oberon gave you to keep.

For you will both be fairies then.  
And one shall sound a coiled shell  
To pilot fairy sailormen,  
And one shall ring a crystal bell.

And you with yellow hair will need  
A willow whistle cut at dawn :

## POEMS FOR ELSA AND HILDA

But *you* shall play a river-reed  
Like any little nut-brown faun.

And Syrinx will forget to flee,  
And Pan, what mischief he had planned :  
And she with you will dance while he  
Pipes up the moon of Fairyland.

## TO ELSA

(*On the Fly-Leaf of "A Child's Garden of Verses"*)

ALL on a day of gold and blue,  
Hearken the children calling you !  
All on a day of blue and gold,  
Here for your baby hands to hold,  
Flower and fruit and fairy bread  
Under the breathing trees are spread.  
Here are kind paths for little feet :  
Follow them, darling ! You shall meet  
Past the enchanted garden-door,  
Friends by the hundred : maybe more !  
Why do you linger ? Ah, you elf,  
Must he come for you then himself ?  
He of the laughing look and mild,  
Whimsical master, glorious child ?  
There you go now, away from me.  
"Where are you Elsa ?"

It is he !

"Come, we must hurry, I and you,  
We've such a number of things to do :  
Posies to gather, thrushes to hear,  
People to wonder about, my dear !  
Take my hand like a good girl. Yes,  
I am the gardener, R. L. S."

[ 81 ]



## A MEXICAN LULLABY

AWAY across the yellow plain  
The sleepy sun before he goes  
Has hung the shoulders of the hills  
With velvet folds of gold and rose :  
And in the garden of the sky  
The petals of the stars uncurl  
Like flowers blooming overhead :  
It's sleepy time, my brown-eyed girl !

The mules are safe in the corral :  
The burros on the homeward road  
Trudge patiently along and think  
Of laying down the heavy load :  
And high upon the mountain-side  
The goat-herd's camp-fire, all ashine,  
Tells that the goats have gone to bed.  
Good-night, O blue-eyed maid of mine !

What if the big white stars come out  
And find the whole world sound asleep  
Excepting just two little girls  
Whose wilful eyes wide open keep ?

## A MEXICAN LULLABY

And there are wingéd dreams that come  
To flutter 'round your beds at night :  
They *never* kiss wide/open eyes,  
So cuddle down, and shut them tight !

## TO ELSA

*(With a volume of "The Arabian Nights")*

WHEN first your dimpled foot shall press  
The enchanted carpet, who can guess  
To what unhallowed crescent coast  
It may transport you: to what host  
Of turbaned aliens, clamoring,  
Abandon you, or to what king?  
A lure beyond the silken sea  
Of amber light and ivory,  
A porcelain tower, a gilded wall,  
A low, monotonous bell to call  
You inland from the smiling strand,  
And, oh, it might be Samarkand!  
But wandering, a child alone,  
Whose hand would comfort you, my own?  
You are so little, who would heed  
To give you sweetened milk at need,  
Honey, and dates, and let you taste  
Pistachio-nut and almond-paste,  
Citron and fig and magic myrrh,  
And bathe you all in rose-water,  
And see you shod in sandalwood?  
If only bells you understood,

## TO ELSA

What voice would soothe your drowsy hour,  
My just-unfurled pomegranate-flower?

When first that swift steed, raven-black,  
Bears you to Bagdad on his back,  
Nor keeps the ground, but soars in air  
And prances gloriously there,  
Will you forget me in your glee?  
For he has fed on sesame  
Until he dares forbidden things:  
And feeling you between his wings,  
What if he fled beyond the sun  
And stars with you, my golden one?

Or seaward-swept at sunset, while  
He heeds your laughter, some lone isle  
Bound with great waves, may bid him rest  
Upon its opalescent breast.  
You could not see the darkening world  
Within his ebon vans close-curved,  
Or know their blackness from the night:  
But if impatient for the light,  
He shook them free and sought the air  
To meet the earliest dawning there,  
Who would befriend a baby girl  
Or find my island-prisoned pearl?

## POEMS FOR ELSA AND HILDA

Nay, wait a little while, my sweet,  
Lest all too soon your questing feet,  
Threading the palace, pause before  
The one desired, forbidden door :  
The thieves that Ali Baba knew  
Would leave the treasure, seeing you,  
And lock you in their cave from me,  
Deaf to my "Open sesame."  
I fear the curious-voweled speech  
Of those veiled women, and the reach  
Of the dread caliph's arm. Oh, where  
All is most beautiful, beware!

And when Aladdin bends to hear  
What you would whisper in his ear,  
(For he the wondrous lamp must hold  
That you may rub its tarnished gold,)  
Smile, darling little sorceress you,  
And say: "Sir, if my wish come true,  
Your jewel-garden I would see.  
And may my mother go with me?"

## TO MY BABY HILDA

(*With Hawthorne's "Wonder-Book"*)

WITHIN your eyes are memories  
Of foam-ringed isles in azure seas,  
Of dragon-guarded groves, and gold  
That none but destined hands might hold.  
You were a sprite of that wild world  
Hercules challenged : you were curled  
Within the enchanted bowl and kept  
Watch for the hero when he slept,  
Lulled to oblivion curiously  
By pleasant clangor of the sea  
Against the hollow gold. You saw  
High-towering Atlas without awe,  
And, perched upon the tilted rim  
Of your odd craft, eluded him,  
You were so little. And you came  
To a white isle of unknown name,  
Where hideous Gorgons laired together :  
And found Medusa's shining feather,  
And saw slim Perseus from the air  
Descend, and met Quicksilver there,  
Adorable god! Oh, was it he

## POEMS FOR ELSA AND HILDA

Persuaded you to come to me,  
And bound the wingéd sandals on  
That bore you far from Helicon?

To-day you were remembering  
Some glorious prenatal thing,  
And I, who saw a snowy gleam  
Like a great sail across your dream,  
Heard music that I knew must be  
Orpheus awake, till suddenly  
The Argo swept with sheer surprise  
That blue Ægean of your eyes,  
And there were you, close folded in  
The warmth of Jason's leopard-skin,  
Showered with foam, shouting in glee  
Till Jason laughed: and even she,  
The goddess of the talking oak,  
Smiled down at you and softly spoke,  
"Child, happy child, and is it true  
We sail to win the fleece for you?"

So when your eyes more thoughtfully  
Take on the color of the sea,  
I feel your heart go hungering home  
Down the immortal wind and foam  
To find again the friends you knew—

## TO MY BABY HILDA

Pandora and her wayward crew  
Of playfellows, small Marigold,  
The sisters weird and gray and old,  
Europa on the snow-white bull,  
The little lad who watched the pool  
Till Pegasus appeared and flew  
Sun-bright across the mirrored blue.

Will you recall — that I may guess —  
The tint and breath and loveliness  
That were Proserpina? Again  
Hear Ceres crying through the rain  
To call her darling back, and run  
To comfort her as you have done?

And since I would not have you miss  
That wingèd life, remember this:  
For you will Pegasus alight  
In any garden, and the white  
Small bloom Quicksilver cherished spring  
To beauty at your summoning.  
Stoop deftly down, my wonder-maid,  
Secure that flower, and unafraid  
Enter the seaward-looking room  
That holds the song of Circe's loom:  
Draw very near, that you may see



## POEMS FOR ELSA AND HILDA

Ulysses cross her tapestry :  
And should you be inwoven there,  
Whisper the wanderer to beware.  
But I shall watch the fountain change  
In the wide porch, upflinging strange  
Frail crystal shapes that prophesy :  
And should a brisk youth happen by  
With cap most oddly fluttering,  
And wilful sandal-shoon that spring  
Into the air to make him laugh,  
And careless cloak and twisted staff,  
Shall I not say, befriending you  
As any mother ought to do,  
“Sir, will you bless her with your care  
Who has the golden fleece for hair?  
Give her the wingéd mind and wise  
Who has the deep sea in her eyes?”

## ENVOY

TO ELSA AND HILDA

LAS TARDES DE ABRIL

AFTERNOONS of April when the yuccas hold  
Ivory pagodas peaked with dusty gold,  
Will you find the garden with the Silver Tree?  
Will my garden love you as it once loved me?

Busy with its mocking-birds and soft South wind,  
You shall find it loving, you shall know it kind:  
You shall seek the shy god, searching everywhere  
Afternoons of April when he hides him there!

May they leave you laughter as they flutter by,  
Afternoons of April winging down the sky!  
Drop you plumes of twilight ere the moon is white,  
Loose the orange-odors for the dappled night!

Eyes as blue as heaven (O shy Rose-souled!),  
Eyes of russet amber (my Heart of Gold!),  
Only you shall love them, find them when you look —  
Afternoons of April in your mother's book!

**The Riverside Press**  
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137

137

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20

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